
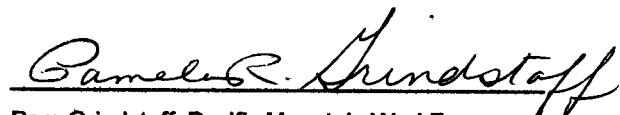


October 15, 2002

Julie Baker
OTED WorkFirst
PO Box 42525
Olympia, WA 98504-2525

Dear Julie Baker:

As representative partners in the Thurston County Local Planning Area, it is our great pleasure to nominate "Village Vans" as a candidate for the 2002 WorkFirst High Performance Bonus in the category of Innovative Projects.


Cynthia Mund, DSHS
Roberta Newell, ESD
Kathy Swartout, South Puget Sound Community College
Pam Grindstaff, Pacific Mountain WorkForce

Thank you,
Thurston County Local Planning Area

WorkFirst High Performance Bonus

Innovative Project

2002 Nomination Form

Name of project (use separate form for each nomination): WorkFirst/Intercity Transit Village Vans Program

Local Planning Area: Olympia

Contact: Cindy Mund, Administrator Olympia CSO

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Project period (only projects operating between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002 will be considered):

Implementation phase of project began 10/22/01. Actual transportation of passengers began 2/25/02 and has continued through the present, 10/15/02. Intercity Transit is applying for state and federal funding to continue operation of service through 6/30/05.

An interagency committee with state and local participation will review your nomination. Please keep your submission to 3 pages of narrative -- the nomination packet must not exceed 3 pages of narrative plus the signature page. Let us know if additional materials, such as marketing tools, newspaper clippings, evaluations, etc. are available upon request. We may request this information before making a final decision on the bonus.

1.	<p>Describe your project. (This section will be scored as 25% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does this project relate to the WorkFirst performance measures? How many persons were served during SFY2002? Please list TANF and low-income persons separately. If known, what was the cost per person served including operating and administrative costs? What TANF purpose does this project address? The four purposes of TANF are on the WorkFirst website under Local Area Planning/ High Performance Bonus Awards/Expenditure Criteria at http://www.wa.gov/WORKFIRST/local/hpbacriteria.htm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village Vans is a WorkFirst/JARC funded project managed by Intercity Transit in Olympia. Its purpose is to provide transportation to low income/TANF residents who lack regular transportation and who are attempting to gain or retain employment. The service provides transportation in situations where use of fixed route transit would be particularly difficult or time consuming. It is not intended to replace fixed route transit where it is the best option and is only intended as a temporary transportation solution for passengers who are transitioning back into the workforce. The program operates two fifteen passenger vans and will add two additional vans in the coming year. The drivers are all Community Jobs participants who drive 20 hours per week. They are acquiring the driving skills and experience that will allow them to move into professional driving employment. The vans transport eligible passengers to DSHS appointments, WorkFirst workshops and accountability activities, WorkFirst partner training classes, job fairs, interviews and a wide range of work search support activities. Since Village Vans began service, it has played a significant support role in helping 55 TANF clients gain regular employment. Village Vans supports several performance measures: meeting accountability expectations, helping TANF clients move from job search to regular employment, providing the means for TANF clients to make more job search contacts and have success in attaining higher wage jobs, and providing training placements for Community Jobs participants The van service is managed by a public transit agency and transit agencies primarily collect data in terms of number of trips provided. From 2/25/02 through 6/30/02, the vans provided 2737 trips. Of these trips, 88% were for TANF recipients. (Through 9/30/02, a total of 5486 trips have been provided, 87% TANF.) According to the passenger data base, 258 different passengers had been transported through 6/30/02 and 80% of those were TANF recipients. Non-TANF passengers were also low income. The drivers for this service are Community Jobs participants so there are no direct operating costs for drivers beyond training and routine day to day expenses. Transit agencies are required to calculate costs to in terms of specific reporting formats. There is no way of calculating the cost per person served; costs are determined on a per trip basis. Capital expenses are not included in calculating the cost. To date the average cost per trip following the transit formula has been \$9.13. This project is designed to help TANF recipients and other low income residents who lack regular

	<p>transportation to participate in job preparation and job search activities. This will help them to gain or retain employment which reduces dependence on government benefits.</p>
2.	<p>What makes this project innovative? (This section will be scored as 50% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What need was addressed and for what population? • How was the project designed? • What impact was desired? • Was there a client focus? Employer focus? • What has been learned? • Did this project simplify the program or its operations? • How did you measure the success of this project?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is intended to help low income residents overcome transportation obstacles in their efforts to transition back into the work force. The funding for the grant requires that at least 51% of the trips have to be for residents who meet the WorkFirst Transportation Initiative's definition of TANF eligible. This project is innovative in that (1) it focuses on meeting the job search needs of TANF and low income residents (2) is operated professionally by an established transit agency, (3) all of the drivers are Community Jobs participants and (4) is the product of strong local collaboration of government and non-profit agencies. • Beginning in 2000, The Thurston Regional Planning Council and the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum began working together on gathering information to update required regional transportation plans. They focused on the transportation gaps faced by special needs populations. One of the target groups was low income residents who lacked regular transportation but needed to gain or retain employment. They were aware that the passage of I-695 had forced Intercity Transit to make substantial cuts in the amount of transit service that had been formerly available to low income housing areas and that there was a continuing impact on the ability of low income residents to access employment. The Human Services Transportation Forum began surveying all of the social service providers in the community and also held numerous focus groups at low income housing sites. They determined that lack of regular transportation is a problem for as many as half of the low income households in Thurston County. When funding opportunities became available through the Federal Transit Administration and WorkFirst, the Human Services Transportation Forum consulted with the Olympia Local Area Planning Team and other key agencies and developed a proposal for Village Vans. Funding was awarded in 2001 and Intercity Transit agreed to manage the project. After implementation began in October, 2001, the project coordinator began collaborating with all of the Olympia Local Area Planning Team partners to determine the best means of setting up service. The partnership with the Local Planning Team has been a vital piece of the success of the project. • The program supplies safe, flexible, reliable, cost effective on-demand transportation to meet a specific set of needs. The intended impact is that as many passengers as possible will use the service to further their job search activities and gain employment. The long term impact will be fewer residents on TANF. • The service has been client focused. • From the operational side, the project coordinator and Intercity Transit staff determined that providing temporary transportation assistance to TANF clients who are engaged in job search activities does seem to be a successful support in helping them find employment and/or stay in compliance with the TANF program. Setting up scheduled rides has reinforced client responsibility for maintaining a timely routine.
3.	<p>Partnerships. (This section will be scored as 25% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What partners were involved in the design of this project? • What partners supported this program in ways that contributed to its success? • Did you bring in new partners for this project? • Did you add new resources—funds, person power, other-in-kind contributions? • Did this project strengthen existing partnerships?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially, the Thurston Regional Planning Council and the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum began discussing the possibility of obtaining funding for this transportation service. They consulted with the Local Area Planning Team and other key community agencies to design a grant proposal. The grant would be a 50-50 combination of funding from the Office of Trade and Economic Development's WorkFirst Transportation Initiative program and the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access Reverse Commute Program. After funding was awarded, Intercity Transit agreed to manage the project and take over the actual design of the day to day service. The project

coordinator held additional focus groups with low income residents at a number of housing sites and asked for input from local social service forums including Partners for Children, Youth and Families and the Thurston County Housing Task Force. The project coordinator also consulted with the Pierce County transportation coalition members and the van service at the Puget Sound Educational Service District. All drivers are Community Jobs participants. Given the state of funding for public transit, there was no way to offer regular transit jobs to Village Van drivers after they completed their training. As an added incentive for drivers to maintain consistent job performance and attendance, the program proposed that drivers could become eligible for further training after six month's of driving. Sound to Harbor Head Start/ECEAP came up with a low package cost to include eligible drivers in their Class C Commercial Driver's License training classes. This would allow drivers to move into other professional driving employment. Driving jobs generally start well above minimum wage and offer good wage progression opportunities. They also said they would be willing to look at any enrolled Village Van drivers to fill their open positions. The first Village Van driver who became eligible for further training is also a client with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and they agreed to pay for the training class. She is almost finished with the training and is preparing to take the test to get her CDL license.

- The Village Van program has been a strongly collaborative venture and has created a new pathway for information and cooperation between the Local Area Partners, Intercity Transit and many Thurston County service agencies. Each new pathway that is established and frequently used strengthens the existing partnerships and extends them more completely into the local community.

Are additional materials available upon request? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Please email this form and mail or FAX an additional page with the signatures of the mandatory partners in your Local Planning Area. All partners must agree to nominate this project.

Nominations are due by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 15, 2002 to:

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